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insulation of the secondary coil. He concluded that, if this were divided into sections properly insulated from each other, the device would be more efficient and give a longer spark. On trial, his expectations were realized. One of these coils was exhibited at a meeting of the British Association held in Dublin in 1857, and afterwards at the University of Edinburgh. A description of Ritchie's coil was published in Silliman's Journal and in the Journal of the Franklin Institute. M. Ruhmkorff procured one, and, copying it successfully, received a prize from the French government for it, — a proceeding which greatly disappointed Mr. Ritchie, who was entitled to it. The improvement of Mr. Ritchie transformed the coil from being a toy giving a two-inch spark to an instrument capable of giving a flash two feet or more in length, and approaching the characteristics of lightning.

At the time of our Civil War Mr. Ritchie's attention was called to the need of a better compass for our navy. The English Admiralty Compass, considered the finest in the world, was in general use at that time. In order to aid his study in making his improvements in this instrument, he made a support so constructed as to give the motions of a vessel at sea.

After much thought and labor he invented the Monitor and Liquid Compasses. The former did good service during the war, and the latter was at once adopted by the Navy, and is now in use all over the world.

He also constructed about that time another instrument which was a great help to the Navy, the Theodolite, fastened to a pendulum hanging in a tank of water, which enabled surveys to be taken of the harbors on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. For these inventions of high merit he will be long remembered by the scientific world.

He was an exceedingly conscientious man, and was ever ready to help others over difficulties which he had overcome himself, and sometimes such persons received the credit and financial profit which rightly belonged to him.

He died on June 1, 1895, in his eighty-first year.

1896.

A. E. DOLBEAR.

MARTIN BRIMMER.

THE various distinguished bodies to which our deceased associate, HON. MARTIN BRIMMER, belonged, have already paid him such varied and appreciative tributes that a detailed biography, in the ordinary sense of the word, would be quite out of place. Nor was his life itself so distinguished by striking adventures or significant dis-

coveries that a biographer could find the details, if he were disposed to use them. As far as his life had a story, it is shortly told.

Martin Brimmer was the son of Hon. Martin and Harriet [Wadsworth] Brimmer, and was born in Boston, 9 December, 1829. His father was a well known and most public spirited citizen, twice Mayor of Boston. For him is named the Brimmer School, and on the older maps of Boston T Wharf is described as "Brimmer's T." Our associate entered the Sophomore Class of Harvard College at the age of sixteen, and graduated in 1849. Without being distinguished as a scholar, he won the very peculiar regard of all who were associated with him, as instructors or companions, even under circumstances where many young men would have made a different impression. He travelled in Europe soon after graduation, and soon after his return began a connection with a great number of literary and charitable societies as trustee, with one or other of which he was constantly engaged to the last. He was chosen a Fellow of Harvard College at an unusually early age, but with universal approval, and, having resigned this post, was again chosen to it and held it till his death, sitting for a part of the interval on the Board of Overseers. He was a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1859, 1860, and 1861, and of the State Senate in 1865. He was a Presidential Elector in 1876, and a candidate for Congress in 1878. In 1869 he was chosen the first president of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and held the post till his death. He visited Europe and Egypt more than once after his first journey; and in the early days of the struggle for the territory of Kansas, had travelled there to find out for himself the truth of a situation so passionately discussed by opposing partisans. A journey in Kansas in 1855 was a more arduous affair than one to Egypt a generation later. Mr. Brimmer died January 14, 1896. This may be said to be his biography, unless one gave a detailed list of all the bodies of which he was the devoted, energetic, intelligent servant, — unless, also, one went into the details of private life, where Mr. Brimmer indeed shone with an unequalled light, but one whose lustre was far too tender and sacred for public exposure.

But if life means not events but character, not what one has done but what one has been, Mr. Brimmer's is a memory which it is peculiarly incumbent on us to record and to cherish. In Virgil's matchless and immortal roll of those who have won eternal happiness, he ranks with the patriot soldier, the inspired bard, the stainless priest, and the keen inventor, "those who have made others remember

them by deserving it." No man ever deserved to be remembered better than our late associate.

He was born and brought up in the midst of all those things which are commonly held to excuse and incapacitate men from hard work. He had an ample fortune, so secured that it might be enjoyed and not dissipated; he had an assured social position, which exempted him from all toil or strife to bring his name into prominence; and a slight physical infirmity might have been held in his case, as in that of the historian Prescott, rather to justify idleness than otherwise. Mr. Brimmer yielded to none of these allurements. He conceived that he held all his personal and social advantages as in trust for the community. He positively enjoyed to work for the strengthening of all that is good, and the suppression of all that is evil, in modern society. By example and by precept, by personal labor and by contributions of money, perhaps most of all by the fact that he was known to be always upon the side of what was high, noble, strong, and lovely, whether he was actually speaking, giving, or working, he was a living proof that what are sometimes censured or ridiculed as the showy fungi of a decaying civilization may be really the healthy flowers of a new and hopeful republic.

The thoughtful student of our society, its merits and its wants, must see clearly that one serious danger to our happiness and prosperity arises from the temper of second thought, — of suspicion and distrust of ourselves and others. A vast number of our ablest, wisest, and most virtuous citizens seem unable to execute their highest purposes without tormenting themselves all the time by some speculation as to what secondary effect their action may have on themselves or others. Mr. Brimmer combined with the soundest and most cultivated intelligence an absolute simplicity of character. Open or reserved as the case demanded, whenever he did speak or act he was perfectly sincere. He was by no means without honorable ambition; but it was an ambition held in strict subservience to courtesy, to honor, and to conscience. He was firm in his opinions and distinct in their expression; but it could only be a very mean or a very brutal person who could be offended by his high-minded and polite refusal to agree to what he thought wrong. The word "culture," so sadly soiled and travestied at the present day, had in Mr. Brimmer its perfect fulfilment. He stood to uncultivated men as an apple does to a crab. In this age, which fancies mere tartness or bitterness constitute flavor, such a presence as his was a living instance of how much the raciest nature is improved by the development of sweetness and tenderness.

Of all Mr. Brimmer's public services, if we are to make the invidious task of selection, the highest place may be given to his work in the Art Museum. Perhaps other men could have filled his place in other institutions equally well; in this he was without a possible rival. By disposition and training alike, he was fitted to be a perfect judge and patron of fine art; and if Boston is ever to keep her head above the overwhelming gulf of pretension and mediocrity that is pouring over the country in matters of art, she will owe her salvation to him more than to any single man. This work elicited from him other work of exquisite power, for which his adaptation had hardly been suspected. He delivered one or two addresses on the importance of the fine arts, which were not merely sound, elegant, and manly, but rose in more than one passage to thrilling and convincing eloquence of a kind rare indeed in these days.

This Academy, like the community, was the better for his membership, and his place will long be unsupplied.

1896

WILLIAM EVERETT.

HENRY WHEATLAND.

HENRY WHEATLAND was elected a Fellow of the Academy in 1845. He was born in Salem, January 11, 1812, and died there, February 27, 1893. His father was Richard Wheatland, born in Wareham, Dorset County, England, in 1762, who came to America in 1783. For several years he sailed from the port of Salem as commander of vessels in the India trade. In 1801 he retired from the sea and became one of the prosperous India merchants who helped to make the fame of the old town in the palmy days of its commerce. In 1796 Captain Wheatland was married to his second wife; and Henry was the sixth and youngest child of this marriage. As a boy he was of a delicate constitution, and, being naturally disposed to study, his parents had him fitted for college in the Salem schools. At the age of sixteen he entered Harvard, and was graduated in the class of 1832. His taste for natural history was evidently formed in boyhood, for we find that in the last year of his college course he was active in the formation of "The Harvard Linnean," of which college society he was the Secretary. The Constitution of this society, as he wrote it, is among his papers. This was probably the immediate precursor of the present Harvard Natural History Society, which was formed in 1837. On leaving college he returned to Salem and became an active worker in the Essex County Natural History Society and the Essex Historical Society.